

"Piece By Piece -- Ephraim!"

Text: John 11:48, "If we let Him thus alone, all men will believe on Him; and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation."

Scripture: John 11:47-57

As we did on Sunday and I mentioned we would do tonight, we are taking another step backwards in the timetable of Jesus. ~~xxxxxxx~~ In the preceeding portion of Scripture, Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead. It is at this point that the chief priests and the pharisees get their heads together and begin to formulate their plot to dispose of this threat to their religion and security. Once again, this is prior to the Feast of the Passover which ~~for~~ Jesus was ~~xxxxxxx~~ the last days of His life. We need to perhaps understand a little of the background of the principles of this scripture if we are to understand what is taking place.

What had taken place at Bethany with the resurrection of Lazarus, had unnerved the authorities. They felt threatened and now had hastily assembled to discuss how to dispose of this imposter. The Sanhedrin was the group which assembled and they were similar to our Supreme Court. This group was made up of Pharisees and Sadducees. The Pharisees were not a political party and their sole aim and interest in life was to live up to the letter of the law. It didn't matter who governed them, as long as they were able to keep the law. The Sadducees were just the opposite. They were a political party. In fact they were the wealthy and aristocratic party. Makes them sound like today's Republicans doesn't it?

But they were also the collaborationist party. So long as they could enjoy their wealth and their comfort they were content to go along with Rome or whoever governed their country. Now all the priests were Sadducees. The priests were the ones who dominated this meeting and therefore it was the Sadducees who did all of the talking. The Sadducees had a reputation for being very discourteous and rude. So it is no wonder then that we read, (vs 49), that Caiaphas who was a Sadducee and the High Priest tells them that they are absolutely stupid. He goes on, (vs 50), to explain that it is a good thing that one man should die for the ~~nation~~ all of the people,

rather than have the Romans come in and kill them all.

Now John interjects here the theology of what Caiaphas is saying, (vs 51)52) This is rather ironic when we consider that if we look at the total significance of the life and ministry of Jesus, we see that this is what was pre-ordained by God to take place. It shows that once again God can use even evil men in His plan for the salvation of mankind. Here was Jesus, the Son of God. A man who did nothing but good while He walked the face of the earth. And yet He is accused of stirring up the people, of blasphemy, of turning the people against Rome and all sorts of wild accusations, none of which were true. Yet, this is part and parcel of God's overall strategy. The real irony of this is to be found in the 50th verse. Here we read, (read it), this is the concern of these men. Let one sheep be slaughtered to save all the rest. Sacrifice one man for the good of all. We understand the implications of this as the fulfillment of John 3:16. But the further irony of it is that the Jews were concerned to save their nation at any cost, and yet in about 30 short years later in 70 A.D. Rome tired of the Jews and their bothersome ways, completely destroyed Jerusalem and leveled it to the ground. The very steps they took to preserve their nation, were the steps that destroyed it.

Then we read, (vs 53), that they plotted from that day how to dispose of Jesus, and Jesus went to a nearby town called Ephraim with His disciples. And we are told by this verse (53), that Jesus no more walked openly among the Jews. This doesn't mean that Jesus was intimidated by the Jews, or that He was taking the coward's way out. It merely means that He was content to bide His time until the time was ripe for Him to complete His ministry.

We are told that "Hindsight is better than foresight," and I am sure most of us have found this out for ourselves. Sometimes it makes a very forceful impression on our minds. It is always easier to look back and say, "Well, I guess I really should have made the opposite choice."

A minister was speaking to a women's circle about his recent trip to Russia. He said, "In rural Russia, I actually saw a woman hitched up with a mule."

"I can believe it," snapped Mrs. Sparks. "That happened when I got married so."

**NEVER**  
In the case of the Jews, they never questioned seriously who Jesus was, and investigated to the point that they wanted to actually find out if he was the Messiah of God. Instead, they just had fixed in their minds that the Messiah was going to come with an army and wipe out all of their enemies, and anyone who came in an altogether different way was an imposter. They never questioned if perhaps God could be working in a new way to save His people, or that the will of God is not being done just as man wants it done. Their only question in all of this seemed to be, "How will this effect my ease and my comfort, and my authority? How will this effect my position in life?"

They were willing to judge things not by right and wrong, but instead, by their own comfort and their own careers and jobs. Think of what would have happened if they had taken this Jesus seriously as the Messiah, and supported Him. The very thing they questioned would have come to pass and the Romans could have been overcome without the loss of a life. They said, "If we let Him thus alone, all men will believe on Him." This could have been the greatest thing that ever happened in the history of the world.

But can we not see much of the world and perhaps even ourselves reflected in these Jews? Too often we come to Jesus with only a half hearted effort, if it is with any effort at all. Many are sceptical of His authority, and of His power to transform lives, much less transform their life. Many offer half-hearted allegiance to Him because it may mean the sacrifice of their money, or of their time, or of their careers and positions. Many are wrapped up in clubs and organizations because they carry with them rings of recognition, and emblems to be worn in the lapel, and titles after the name.

But oh my friends, there is coming a life beyond this one, which will spell for us all either a place in God's kingdom, or a place in hell. How we receive this Jesus Christ is the determining factor. All of our man made efforts at power and prestige and wealth ~~ax~~ will rot and fall away, but what





Shirley & Ralph Charles Link, Nancy Link, Dale with Lianne his wife, Lloyd Link with Karen his wife  
Jessica in front of Ralph C. Link  
Ethan and Alisha in front of R. Dale and Lianne Link (the eldest son & family)











Ralph C. Link  
153 Keck Road  
Sarver, Pa. 16055  
(412) 352-1103

Born: April 9, 1929, Pittsburgh, Pa.  
Married: December 15, 1951  
Wife: Shirley Margaret Neill  
Born: December 8, 1930, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Children: Ralph Dale Link, born May 11, 1955, Pittsburgh, Pa.  
Lloyd Alan Link, born May 28, 1958, Pittsburgh, Pa.  
Nancy Lynn Link, born March 15, 1961, Butler, Pa.

**SCHOOLING:**

Graduated from Perry High School, Pittsburgh, Pa.  
June 1947

Lay Ministry School, Penn West Conference of United  
Church of Christ, September 1965 to May 1969

Commissioned Lay Minister June 1969

Lancaster Theological Seminary, Lancaster, Pa.,  
September 1970

Graduated from Lancaster Theological Seminary May 1974

Ordained to Christian Ministry March 10, 1974

**PASTORATES:**

As Lay Minister: short term, 1 month or less in  
various churches 1965 to 1967

Emlenton Lamartine Charge of United Church of Christ  
1967 to 1969

Short term in various churches 1970 until Seminary  
entrance July 1970

July 1970 to December 1973 Student Pastor at Trinity  
Charge, New Bloomfield, Duncannon, Pa., Penn Central  
Conference, United Church of Christ

December 1973 to present, St. Paul's United Church of  
Christ, Butler, Pa., Penn West Conference, United  
Church of Christ

## PERSONAL TESTIMONY

OF

Ralph C. Link

I am the youngest of five children. I was born just prior to the onset of the Depression. Our family was very poor. My father was an alcoholic and my mother was a very religious person who was searching for the Lord. During my childhood she did her best to teach me the things of the Lord. Later in life she came to a personal relationship with Him.

I grew up in the Evangelical and Reformed Church where salvation by grace alone was not preached nor taught. I knew all about Jesus, what He did, how He lived, His miracles, His death and resurrection, but I didn't know Him personally.

My life had many ups and downs and all the while I was attending church and striving with my good works to please God. At a very low point in my life when we were deeply in debt and my wife and three children were all ill, I came to the crossroads. I watched a Billy Graham Crusade on television from some distant city and the message he preached seemed to be directed right at me. I wrestled with making that commitment to Christ, but didn't. The next afternoon and evening at work on the 4 to 12 shift I came to the conclusion that I needed to make that commitment to Christ. It seemed like there was no other choice if life was to have any meaning. That night when I came home from work at 1:00 A.M., I laid face down on the living room floor and told God that I couldn't live my life in my own strength and I accepted the gift of salvation from my Savior Jesus Christ. My life has never been the same.

Through several meaningful circumstances I was called by God to serve Him in the Christian Ministry and to help spread that wonderful message of salvation through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. What a wonderful and rewarding time it has been and I give Him all the praise for my salvation and the opportunity to serve Him.

## STATEMENT OF FAITH

OF

Ralph C. Link

I believe the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired inerrant Word of God. I believe the Bible is the complete revelation of His will for the salvation of men and it is the final authority for the Christian faith and life.

I believe in one God, who is eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

I believe in the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ that He is true God and true man. I believe that He was born of the Virgin Mary, that He lived in sinless life, that He performed the miracles recorded in Scripture, that He died on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins, that He bodily arose from the dead, that He ascended on high where He is at the right hand of Almighty God as our intercessor.

I believe in the Holy Spirit and that He comes and indwells each believer at the time of conversion. I believe that He lives in each believer to lead, to instruct, and to convict so that a believer may live a more godly life.

I believe that through the shed blood of Jesus Christ and through His resurrection, this is the only ground for justification and salvation for all who receive Him. A Lord and Savior and to such as receive Him, they are born of the Holy Spirit and become children of God.

I believe water baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances of the Church but are not means of salvation.

I believe in the personal and premillennial and imminent coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I believe in the resurrection of the dead, for the believer to resurrection of life and joy with the Lord, for the unbeliever to resurrection of judgement and everlasting punishment.